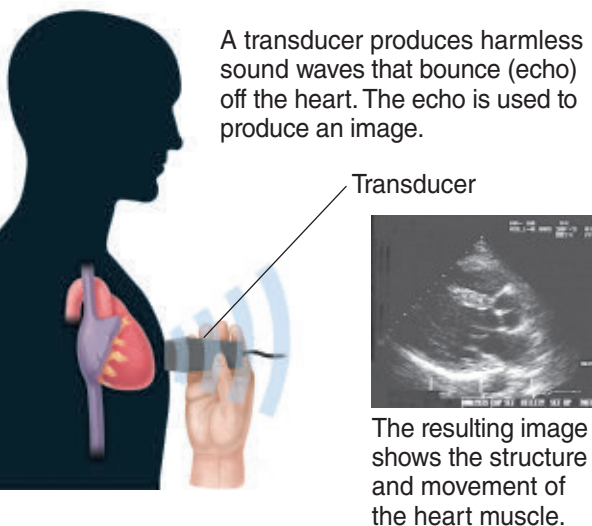


What Is Stress Echocardiography?

Stress echocardiography, or **stress echo**, is a test that uses sound waves (ultrasound) to form an image of the heart. The resulting image, called an **echocardiogram**, shows the structure and movement of the heart. With a stress echo, images are taken before and after the heart is stressed to increase heart rate. By comparing images, your doctor can see changes in the way your heart muscle works when made to beat harder and faster. The images help check for blocked coronary arteries, problems with the heart valves, or other heart conditions. Exercise is usually used to increase heart rate. In some cases, medication is used instead.

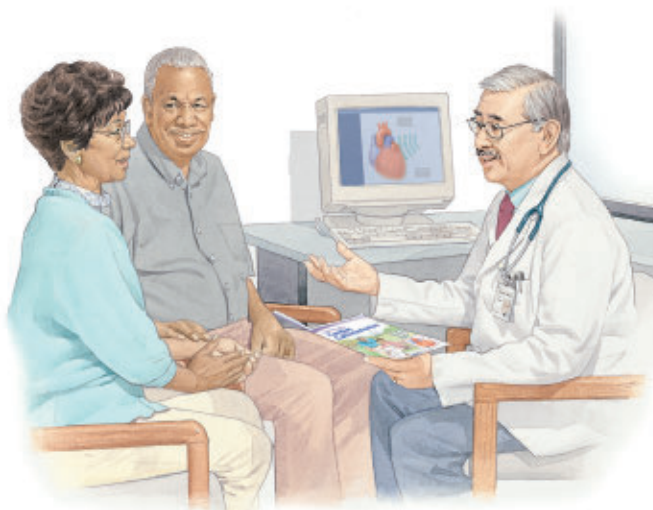
How Stress Echo Works

During a stress echo, a **transducer** (a small device that produces sound waves) is placed on your chest. The sound waves bounce off your heart and are changed into images on a screen.



Finding Out the Results

Your doctor will discuss the results of the test with you. This may happen right after the test or at a later time. The results from stress echo help you and your doctor plan treatment. If more information is needed to learn more about your heart, your doctor may recommend further testing.



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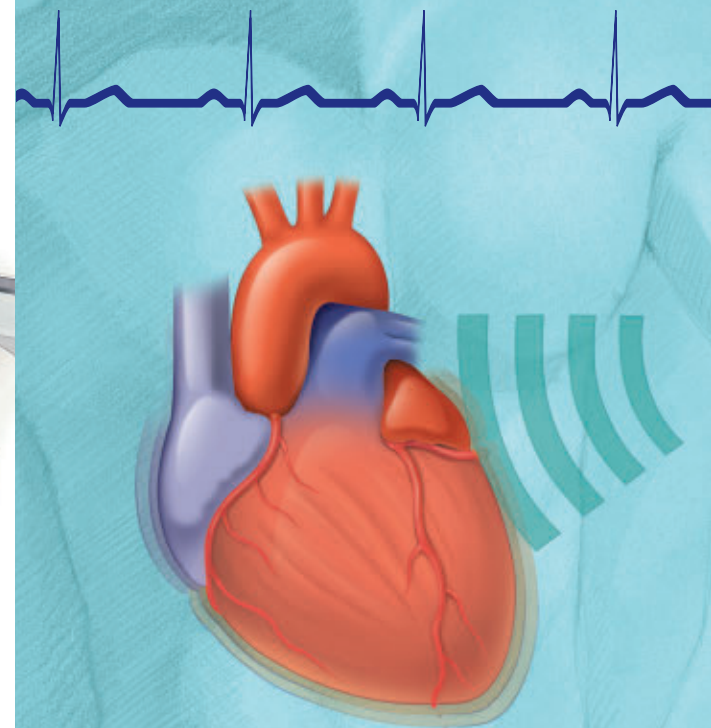
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STRESS ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY



Recording Your Heart's
Response to Exercise

Before Your Stress Echo

Having a stress echo is simple and causes little or no discomfort. For best results, prepare for the test as instructed. Be sure to:

- Stop eating, drinking, smoking, and having any caffeine before the test as directed. In general, these activities need to be stopped 3 to 4 hours before the test.
- Stop taking certain medications the day of the test, if so directed.
- Allow 1 to 2 hours from arrival to the time you can leave.
- Wear a two-piece outfit and shoes that are comfortable for walking.
- After checking in, you'll be asked to undress from the waist up. You'll be given a hospital gown to wear.



You will need to avoid eating, drinking, smoking, and having any caffeine for a set amount of time before the test. Coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate, and some over-the-counter pain relievers contain caffeine. If you have diabetes, ask what you can eat before the test.

During Your Stress Echo



Electrodes will be placed on your chest for an electrocardiogram (ECG). This test records the electrical activity of your heart. Then a technician places a transducer at several sites on the left side of your chest. While you lie on an exam table, images of your heart at rest are recorded. Your blood pressure is also monitored.

Next, you will walk on a treadmill or pedal a stationary bike. Your blood pressure and heart rate will be monitored. Right after you stop exercising, a second set of heart images is recorded. The doctor then compares the sets of images to learn more about the way your heart functions at rest and after exercise.

If your health prevents you from exercising, a medication called **dobutamine** can be used to increase your heart rate. This medication is given through an IV line placed in your arm. Once the medication has taken effect, images may be recorded every 2 to 3 minutes.

Tell Your Doctor

Be sure to tell your doctor if you feel any of the following during the test:

- Pain or discomfort in your chest, neck, back, arms, shoulders, or jaw
- Shortness of breath
- Irregular heartbeat
- Dizziness or headache
- Fatigue

After Your Test

When the test is done, you can return to your normal routine. Ask your doctor about resuming any medication you were told to skip before the test.

Special Note

Stress echo is noninvasive and involves little risk. Your doctor will discuss any possible risks of exercise or the use of dobutamine with you.